

Reviewing Post-Flood Situation & Farming way Forward on Citizens' Charter of Demand Organized by National Humanitarian Network (NHN)

I congratulate both National Humanitarian Network and all its partner civil society organizations for joining hands in highlighting the way forward by reviewing the post-flood situation and for formulating this citizens' charter of demand.

I have gone through your entire citizen's charter for sustainable rehabilitation of flood affectees and was impressed by the effort you have put in, in identifying the weaker areas in the administration and planning of the public sector organizations as well as the reform agenda suggested for improving those weaker links.

I was particularly impressed by seeing that special attention has been given to the role of women in relief & rehabilitation in flood affected areas.

You have very rightly pointed out that though we cannot fight natural hazards yet we should put in every possible effort in reducing the risk.

I was appalled to see our rate of deforestation (2% per year); no wonder it is one of the highest in the world. And was equally distressed to know that in just fifteen years (1990-2005) we have lost almost 25% of our forests.

Having lesser rain and fewer natural forests than the average of the world is a phenomenon beyond our control but of course we can stop the further deforestation rather we should try to make a deliberate effort to increase our forests.

Other risks like encroachment of land in the riverine belt; management of canal embankments; lack of care in development of physical infrastructure; and excessive poverty are such risks which should be controlled for a better future of our generations and the country.

Disaster or risk management is a relatively new field in Pakistani public sector; and there would be issues in its planning and implementation but it's a step in the right direction which should be continued with honesty and professionalism.

Objection raised regarding the policy of issuing Watan Cards to the head of households when majority of the households are headed by men is a serious one. Let me share with you that we are facing an extreme dearth of data and in absence of any reliable data this policy was meant to ensure that benefits reach to maximum number of households affected by the flood.

Only a very fresh analysis of BISP poverty survey data suggests that 85% of households are headed by male and 15% are headed by females of the family.

No doubt this would have excluded the female-headed households but it was an inevitable compromise, which the government had to make to ensure the efficient and transparent disbursement of the benefits to the real deserving.

Secondly, the probability of having a CNIC is much higher with the male than the female of the family.

Basing the issuance policy on the district mentioned on the CNIC was another such compromise, which we had to make. But I am sure you would agree with me that if this condition was removed it would have opened the doors for corruption, favoritism, and nepotism and the faulty or wrong inclusions would be much larger than the exclusion of deserving families.

Though I cannot speak on behalf of either NADRA or NDMA or PDMA's yet I promise you that I will do my best to bring the concerns raised by this joint platform of civil society organizations to the policy makers of these organizations.

Coming to another very important point, raised in your charter, regarding floods causing a reduction of 1% to 3% of progress towards attainment of MDGs. I would completely agree with this observation as we at BISP were anticipating around 5 million families to fall below the cut-off score of 16.17 in our ongoing poverty scorecard survey. But after the floods our projections are indicating that around 7 million families would become our beneficiary once survey in entire country is completed by the end of June 2011.

You have very rightly pointed out that politicizing humanitarian assistance is a clear violation of the UN Guidelines.

In order to answer this Ladies and Gentlemen, let me apprise you a little bit about BISP the largest social safety net of the country; and especially its methods of beneficiary identification, its role in women empowerment and dealing with emergencies like flood

BISP was launched in 2008 as a means to provide financial assistance to the poorest of the poor adversely affected by the high inflation and the impact of the international economic crisis.

Initially, BISP adopted a parliamentarian based targeting system for providing cash grant assistance to the deserving families. Under this system 8000 forms were given to each parliamentarian, regardless of his or her political affiliations, to distribute among the poorest of his constituency.

Though verification of beneficiaries was done by NADRA, yet in order to make the targeting more transparent, objective, with minimal inclusion or exclusion errors, BISP stopped

identification through parliamentarians on 30th April, 2009 and adopted a more scientific and improved targeting mechanism, based on Proxy-Means Testing (PMT).

For the first time in Asia, any social safety program has opted for a PMT based poverty survey of the entire population. 70 % of the country has already been surveyed and we are very hopeful that by the end of Current Financial Year we would complete the survey of entire country.

How BISP is Empowering women

Women empowerment is an integral part of the design of the programme. All benefits to the deserving families are being provided through the woman of the family.

Ratio of female registration of women with NADRA, particularly in remote areas of the country has picked up as possession of CNIC is a pre-requisite for eligibility under BISP.

Figures of last two years will illustrate my point. In 2009 for the first time in the history of Pakistan, female outnumbered men in CNIC registration. The figure was 3.45 million for male while that of female was 4.8 million. Similarly up to June 2010, 1.45 million female as compared to 1.3 million male have been registered with NADRA.

Further, even in geographically remote and culturally ultra conservative areas of the country like FATA, interior Sindh and Baluchistan the rate of female registration has increased considerably. BISP is helping the women folk of the country, particularly rural women in getting their identity and achieving self respect

BISP has, in a short span of time, reached out to more than 3 million families across the country. In reaching out to the underprivileged and the vulnerable of society, the route is the

female of the family. All our initiatives are passed on to the beneficiaries families through their female family members.

BISP does not aim to foster dependency on handouts. Under BISP'S graduation strategy, The microfinance initiative of Waseela-E-Haq aims to facilitate the income generation opportunities for women, often the most vulnerable part of our society, by providing them micro loans and thus giving them a chance to escape the vicious cycle of poverty.

Our Vocational Training Program Waseela e Rozgar has been launched by the Prime Minister of Pakistan on 12th October 2010. This initiative envisages providing unskilled female workers or their nominees across Pakistan with the demand driven skill based training to enhance prospects of earning a dignified livelihood. All expenses including boarding, lodging and tuition fee will be borne by BISP.

Under Waseela e Sehet, bread earner of beneficiary families is provided life insurance of upto Rs 100,000. President of Pakistan was pleased to announce the start of the initiative from 1st November, 2010. In the next phase of Waseela e Sehet, health insurance would be provided to all the beneficiaries' families through female members of the family.

BISP's role in Disasters/Emergencies

Ladies and Gentlemen,

BISP also contributes to relief and mitigation efforts in the time of national emergencies. We have a policy of emergency relief and rehabilitation and some of the work undertaken is as under:

Approximately Rs. 4.46 billion has been disbursed to more than 1 million BISP beneficiaries affected by the recent flood.

Rs. 28 Million has been paid to 3965 IDP families from FATA and Bajur

Rs. 3.82 Billion has been paid to 318,126 IDP families from Malkand Division.

Rs. 42 Million has been paid to 3729 earthquake affected families in Balochistan.

Rs. 13.6 Million has been paid to more than 1300 victim families in Pakistan under bomb blast victim package.

Moreover, we are planning a comprehensive compensation package for sustenance of families of civilian victims of bomb blasts. It includes stipends for education health for the victims' families.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I hope that by listening to the various policies, initiatives and achievements of BISP you would be forced to reconsider your impression about the politicizing of the humanitarian efforts made by the present government. Secondly, you would also be in a better position to judge the efforts made by the present government for attaining the MDGS especially the empowerment of the women and poverty reduction.